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## Challenges in a Psychotherapy Group

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Discourse analysts have looked at several varieties of verbal discord, including Gumperz's (82) studies of interethnic crosstalk, Atkinson and Drew's (79) examination of courtroom disputes and Marjorie Goodwin's (82, 83, 87) analyses of disagreement among children.<sup>1</sup> What all verbal discord has in common is its disquieting, face-threatening nature. Discord violates general interactive expectations of agreement, cooperation and harmony; and the expression of disagreement violates the addressee's want for external acceptance and approval. Therefore we can assume that whenever discord is verbally expressed either it is unavoidable, or it is allowable within a very particular context. Discord can seem dangerous; small wonder, then, that it is usually masked, mitigated, or deniably ambiguous.

There are a few contexts that do allow discord. The courtroom and the university seminar room are two obvious examples, as is sounding, the verbal duelling among black urban teenagers. Another context that must allow expression of discord is psychotherapy. Differences between therapist and client, or among the members of a family, need to be brought out into the open, addressed explicitly and resolved, where possible. Also, the recent use of family or community interventions with substance abusers and other individuals whose abusive behavior affects and threatens others is opening up new contexts for the permissible and positive expression of differences. One particular psychotherapeutic context that can thrive on some degree of discord is the therapy group. Most groups allow expression of disagreement, and will use, as a therapeutic tool, the questioning of an individual member's behavior, motivations, and intentions. In fact, only in the courtroom and the therapy office is there such license to question the inner psychological process and truthfulness of another human being. I have chosen the context of a psychotherapy group for my investigation.

The data for this study was taken from audiotapings of a women's psychotherapy group, with 9 members (most of whom were themselves therapists) and 1 paid facilitator. I have concentrated on three episodes, extracted from three separate group sessions. These three episodes share a common topic, the present life circumstances and life choices of one group member, Kathleen, who is absent for the first two episodes and present for the third. Each of the other group members expresses judgements of Kathleen's choices, both when she is absent and to her face.

One particular expression of discord and judgement is the challenge. Challenges can be found in the courtroom, on the

streets, in classrooms, on soccer fields, and in the therapy office. There are many uses of challenges in therapy groups which are easily recognizable to all members of the speech community; challenges can be used in joking behavior, as practice or mock challenges (when the addressee is not present), in confrontations, and as unpredictable interventions mirroring or commenting upon another group member's behavior or affect in a constructive way. I define challenges as the expression of a negative judgement of the speaker toward a past or present act a) of the addressee, whereby this act a) can be an action, attitude, assumption, utterance, or plan; the challenge further includes the speaker's implicit or explicit preference for the addressee to either not do act a) or rather do a different act b).

There are felicity conditions that are fulfilled in successful challenging.<sup>2</sup> Many of these are specifically formulated for a psychotherapy group context, yet can be restated for other contexts. The contextual condition stipulates that the speaker (S) has positive intentions and sympathy toward the addressee(s) (A), and toward A's welfare. This is a necessary condition for the establishment of trust in any therapy group; it cannot be presupposed elsewhere. The preparatory conditions include that S negatively judges act a) of A, that S believes A will continue with act a) unless challenged, that S does not believe that act a) is in A's, S's, or the group's best interest, that S believes a different act b) would be in A's, S's or the group's better interests, and that S believes A can do act b). Act b), by the way, can simply represent the absence of act a). The propositional content condition allows any and all past or present acts of a group member, which are relevant, to be the targets of a challenge. The sincerity condition differentiates between all serious challenges, where S does want A to discontinue act a) and do act b), and non-serious challenges, where S is joking and/or has no power to challenge A's act a). This last situation can occur when the facilitator insists upon a topic, and the group members find it uncomfortable but unavoidable. Finally, the essential condition states that the utterance counts as an attempt by S to get A to stop act a) and to change to act b). There is no uptake necessary for the utterance to count as a challenge, although the challenge definitely invites a response from A.

There are a few, and only a few canonical challenge forms, for example: So what?, Are you kidding?, Sez who?, Care to step outside?, and You gonna make me?. It is not surprising that there are so few overt challenge forms. The pool of indirect speech acts, often the analyst's despair, is so large and structurally undifferentiated precisely because so much of human verbal interaction can be face-threatening and needs to be softened in the interests of cooperation and harmony. So challenges exhibit the same familiar indirect features discussed by Robin Lakoff (75), Brown and Levinson (78), and others, such

as dummy pronouns, agentless passives, past tense, continuous aspect, hypotheticals, tag forms, contractions, use of quasi-modals and modals, more or less obliquely evaluative lexical items, delaying discourse particles, hesitation, pausing, and self-editing behavior, and phonetic and syntactic performance errors. Much of the intensifying effect of challenges is concentrated in the use of emphasis and other intonational features, which are more deniable. However, there are also stronger challenges to be found in this data, with very overt features of negation, direct address with proper name, command forms, questions which require answers, intensifiers, expletives, overtly discordant discourse particles and obviously negative evaluative lexical items.

Given that challenges, like other face-threatening acts, often depend on a low profile and camouflage for their use in verbal interactions, structural features are not enough to distinguish them clearly. Challenges do, however, have a particular sequential profile, which can be used to differentiate them in analyses of discourse, and which probably serve the participants as a main means of recognizing and interpreting them as they occur during interactions, as well. The challenge sequence consists of at least three parts: an impetus, the challenge and a response, whereby the response can be a counter-challenge (a challenge uttered in direct response to a prior challenge) or a more conciliatory, conceding remark (Resp.). The impetus need not be conversationally, or even geographically contiguous with the challenge. Schegloff (84) points out other sequences that need not be in the form of adjacency pairs, such as scolding, praising, and warning. An impetus that is an explicit utterance within the conversation is a pre-challenge (Pre-C).

The challenge response, however, does have to follow the challenge closely, or be very marked by its absence. I have differentiated two different challenging responses to a challenge, based on their sequential order of occurrence, and thus representing different degrees of aggravation. A counter-challenge (CC) follows a challenge, and marks disagreement with some part or whole of the challenge. A counter-counter-challenge (CCC) follows a counter-challenge and thus signals an even more aggravated disagreement in the challenging sequence. I have designated the challenging response to a CCC as a counter-challenge, for simplicity and due to the fact that in such a sequence the counter to a CCC is probably allied with, or even identical to, the original counter-challenger. There are also mock challenges (MC), which are challenges to someone who is not present; they can either be serious or joking. Indirect challenges (IC) are challenges expressed within the group interaction, but targeted for someone other than the explicit addressee or not present for the interaction. Target is used here in Levinson's (88:170) sense of the "informational and illocutionary destination of the

message." The difference between a MC and an IC directed toward Kathleen in her absence, for example, is that a MC contains some form of direct address, while an IC simply refers to her indirectly, if at all.

The following are examples of challenges taken from the data:3

1.(Impetus = the group seeking a meeting with Kathleen)

1 Regina =Well, V, Vanessa, you, YOU should just SAY something about it because . KATHleen won't COME . that's REAL CLEAR. She's not going to LEAVE . that JOB on a weekend between now and the da, the time she has her time off. She made that real clear to me. (2.5)

2 Vanessa Oh. (1.0)

Analysis: Impetus -> C -> Resp.

2.

1 Vanessa She MOVED and she, hasn't got a phone installed yet. (1.5) And she doesn't have an address she [could have given me, either.

2 Dana [KATHLEEN, KATHLEEN, KATHLEEN.

3 Sarah Dana, YOU'RE just CAUGHT in people tonight, huh?

4 Dana What?

5 Sarah You're caught in people tonight, huh?

6 Dana Caught in people?

7 Sarah Yeah.

8 Dana I just feel so SAD about KATHLEEN.

Analysis: Pre-C -> MC (as Kathleen is absent) -> CC ->

Question for Repetition -> CC Repetition -> Request for Verification -> Verification -> Conceding Resp.

3.

1 Regina ((Kathleen's)) suggestion WAS . that perhaps she come on a Thursday night and do, her, class rap on a Thursday night. (4.0)

2 Jessica Well, THAT'S not MY first choice, definitely, for sure. (2.0) cuz I'd like her to be included in the whole group. (2.0)

3 Dana Well, my reACTION, IS to SAY, TOUGH, you know, come ANYway. (4.0)

4 Jessica Well, that's pretty hard-nosed.

Analysis: Pre-C (= IC (from Kathleen to the group) -> CC and CC -> CCC

The sequential analysis of each example is presented directly following it. In the first example Regina uses direct address to single out Vanessa as the C target. Vanessa's response in 1.2 is concessive in nature, though she does appear to balk at complying with Regina's strong suggestion. In the second example 2.1 is a Pre-C for the MC in turn 2, which

receives no response from its addressee, of course, but is counterchallenged in 2.3 and 2.5. Sarah uses direct address in 2.3 to target Dana, but leaves it out in 2.5, as Dana is already directly engaged in the challenging process with Sarah. The CC receives a conceding response from Dana in 2.8.<sup>4</sup> In 3.1 Regina delivers a message, an indirect challenge from Kathleen, for the group to change the time they seek to meet with Kathleen from a weekend day to a Thursday evening. The CCs in 3.2 and 3.3 match in their non-acceptance of this challenge, although in 3.4 Jessica objects through CCC to the unyieldingness of Dana's response. There is no response to this CCC, because another turn, a neutral question simultaneous with 3.4, allowed Dana to turn her attention from the CCC and focus on the question.

Even within the permissive environment of therapy, challenges are a dangerous, almost always dispreferred move. Pomerantz (84), Labov and Fanshel (77), and Brown and Levinson (78) have all argued persuasively that speakers prefer agreement. Marjorie Goodwin (83) lists several features that mark dispreferred moves and sequences, among them discourse markers of dispreference; delaying features, such as pauses and qualifiers like I think or hypotheticals; and requests for clarification and questions that ask for repetitions or partial repetitions. Many of these features can be found in this data. Note, for instance, the occurrences of well in turn-initial position in 1.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4. The pauses following 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, as well as the silence following 1.1 and preceding 1.2 mark the dispreferred status of these moves. The hypothetical phrasing of 3.1 is responded to in kind in 3.2. Example 2 contains an excellent example of a question for repetition in 2.4, answered by a repeating of the CC in 2.5; as well as a request for verification in 2.6, followed by a verifying Yeah in 2.7.

Of great interest is the distribution of particular discourse particles. Well, with a rising intonation, started 7 challenge turns, 3 CC turns, and 2 CCCs; only 3 such wells began non-challenge turns. Well, with a level to falling intonation, initiated 13 challenge turns, 8 CC turns and 3 CCCs, while 8 falling wells began non-challenge turns. Schifffrin (82:150) claims that well functions as "a response marker...for agreement and disagreements, retreats and escalations." Lakoff (75:53,66) argues that well is a hedge that shows deference to addressees by giving them options, and marks that the speaker may be uncertain, or "unable to vouch for the accuracy of a statement." Levinson (83:307,334) reports that well often marks the dispreferred status of a turn in a sequence.

Other discourse particles with even less of a hedging flavor, appearing more overtly discordant, are not only, with falling intonation, besides, with rising intonation, and except, with rising intonation, each of which introduced at least one C, CC, or CCC.

By far the most telling particle distribution comes with but. Schiffrin (82) analyzes many examples of but as a marker of contrast. But "is often found between two utterances in which there is a polarity difference" (190), and its "adversative sense" (196) can be interpreted within the scope of a turn and across the domain of the entire sequence of the discourse. (190-209) In turn-initial position, but, with a level to slightly rising intonation, began 6 Cs, 4 CCs, and 3 CCCs; and of a total of 34 buts throughout the data, every single turn-initial and utterance-initial but began some form of challenge. 12 out of sixteen non-initial buts were used in C utterances, as well.

Pauses are another indicator of disagreement, according to Goodwin (83:666) and also Pomerantz (84:65), who differentiates them from agreements, which "are performed with a minimization of gap between the prior turn's completion and the agreement turn's initiation." I have analyzed the pauses following challenges,<sup>5</sup> some of which are of very unusual length. The pauses following a challenge were equally long, whether the C was succeeded by another type of challenge or by a conceding remark. Both types of pause averaged around 2.5 seconds, although there were four times as many pauses preceding a CC or CCC as preceding a concessive response. Also 3 pauses prior to a subsequent CC or CCC were markedly long, at 6.5, 7.0, and 9.0 seconds. This parallels the findings thus far for frequency of occurrence and degree of aggravation for different challenge moves in the challenge sequence.

There were also many pauses following challenges that received no response. Their number equalled three times the number of pauses preceding a subsequent conciliatory response. Here there were 5 pauses that were inordinately long, especially for this verbal and rowdy group: 7.0, 7.5, 8.0, 10.0, and 11.0 seconds. The final pause that separated the third episode from the rest of that night's session was, in fact, 1 minute and 23.0 seconds long.

At the less direct end of the feature spectrum signalling dispreferred moves are hesitations, stutters and other indicators of self-editings. Many such features are found in this data, as well. Note the stuttering in 1.1, and the hesitations in 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, and 3.3. Such hesitation features were found to be equally distributed among ICs and CCs. There were twice as many such features, however, among the initial direct challenge turns. And only half as many again throughout the CCCs. It would seem that challenging was accompanied by more hesitation. Having the addressee absent, or being provoked to a CC reduced these hesitation features by half, and once a speaker was at the level of a CCC there were only a quarter of such hesitation phenomena left.

Separate from the question of the preference status of challenges as a discourse move, but related, is the issue of the preferred response within the challenge sequence.

Atkinson and Drew (79) found that the preferred second in a challenge sequence in the courtroom was a CC. Any delay was interpreted by the participants as a concession.<sup>6</sup> In this data, that only appears to be the case with CCCs. The frequency patterns of challenge responses is 2 to 1 in favor of conciliatory or concessive responses, as opposed to CCs. The preferred response to CCs is unclear at this point, as the CCCs and conciliatory responses were found to be equally frequent. With CCCs, however, the CCs are favored 2 to 1 over other responses. It would appear, then, that only after the challenging had become more aggravated was further challenging a preferred response.

There are other questions that have arisen in examining this data. One of the most interesting regards the analysis of participant roles, and what properties of the utterances and their sequential ordering allow participants to infer the intended addressee and/or target, again as defined by Levinson (88). In a 10-member group many turns can be directed primarily toward one other group member, and yet be relevant to others, or the entire group; for this reason an entirely different individual may respond to the turn, even a challenging turn, without confusion or complaint from other group members.

Also, in two episodes one group member acted as messenger for Kathleen, who was absent; and in each of these episodes many challenges were directed toward the messenger, even though Kathleen was definitely the target. The identity shifting of these two group members was quite complex, though rarely unclear to any of the participants. In 3.1 Regina is acting as messenger and delivering Kathleen's challenge to the group. In 1.1 Regina is using her special access to information about Kathleen to directly challenge Vanessa to set up a meeting time that will be possible for Kathleen, although the group had, at that point, not agreed to such a change in meeting times. In 2.1 Vanessa is the messenger, giving the group information about Kathleen that upsets Dana and leads to her MC in 2.2. The following example illustrates shifts in role within one turn for Vanessa as messenger, and as herself:

4.

- 1 Vanessa Okay, I need to, I need to put out for Kathleen that, . she's had to take a quote, straight job, unquote; she's getting off for the=  
2 Dana =She's HAD to? She said that?  
3 Vanessa Yeah.  
4 Dana OH, KATHLEEN, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, GIRL?  
5 Vanessa I'm quoting. . She's gonna have to take off for the second and the third, that weekend,

Analysis: Pre-C -> C -> Resp. -> MC -> Resp.

In 4.1 Vanessa labels the turn as a 'putting out information for Kathleen', and uses an explicit quote/unquote framing to

distance herself from the job description that Kathleen used, which she appears to assume will evoke evaluative responses from the group. In 4.2 she is challenged on the veracity of her reporting of Kathleen's words, and she answers this C in 4.3. In 4.5 she again uses the concept of 'quoting' to keep the force of the strong MC in 4.4 off herself, the addressee by default, though not the target.

There is also the issue of permission to challenge and the distribution of challenges among the group members. There appears to be an egalitarian assumption that all members of the group have an equal right to challenge and be challenged. In point of fact, however, the facilitator, while challengeable, is not an equal target for challenging, due to her leadership role and heightened status. The distribution of power in therapy is simply non-reciprocal. In example 5, below, Sarah challenges Theodora, the facilitator, with explicit and very strong challenge turns:

5. (Impetus = a series of Cs from the group to Kathleen)

- 1 Sarah I, I want to interRUPT for one SEcond. I want to be the group's observer here .. that role that you were doing, because what I SEE the group doing is trying to RESHcue Kathleen around MONey, and I think that's, WEIRD. (1.0)
- 2 Theodora I don't, I, it's interesting cuz I don't feel like I'm trying to rescue ya, I just want (you to
- 3 Kathleen ( Uhuh.  
Theodora know that, from where I'm sitting, what you're, doing, looks, real fucked. And I'm trying to, . GET it. I mean, I would be very happy ta, walk outa here and say, (1.0) sounds right, sounds on but, (1.0) some BOTtom level, (1.0) thing I have is that you're in a place where you're not gettin any feed-back, (1.5) and, you're living, in isolation, and (1.5) um (4.0 secs) [I, I felt, .
- 4 Sarah [ I want to ask one thing,
- [Theodora, and so what?
- 5 Theodora [ Uhuh? Fine. It's fine. . And, she shouldn't ha, I think it's, it's fair that you should know what I think from, from over here.
- 6 Sarah Okay, okay. I hear the group really wants Kathleen to do sumpin different.
- 7 Kathleen Yeah, uhuh.

Analysis: Impetus -> C -> CC/C -> CCC -> Resp./C -> C -> Resp.

Here Sarah uses a particular therapeutic method for commenting on the group's interactions with Kathleen, by designating herself the group observer, and then challenges the group, self-admittedly interrupting, using emphasis, the negative evaluation weird, hesitating, and even making a speech error. The facilitator responds to the challenge indirectly, in that

she denies trying to rescue Kathleen; but she addresses her remarks to Kathleen exclusively, as signaled by the pronoun you. She then goes on to further challenge Kathleen very strongly, using the expletively-evaluative verb fucked in a turn filled with hesitations. Sarah rejoins with a CCC directly addressed to Theodora, containing a canonical challenge form so what?. Theodora concedes with fine and an elaborated fine, and in continuing even begins by using she; immediately, however, she switches back to you referring to Kathleen, and justifies her previous challenge, with stuttering and self-editing. Sarah gives up directly challenging Theodora, with two okays; but she does continue her challenge to the group as a whole, and gets only a corroborating response from Kathleen, who is the only group member not addressed by Sarah's challenge. The facilitator is hard to challenge; her strategy of evading the challenge is indirect, yet clearly discernable within a sequential framework analysis.

Further, the two members newest to the group challenged by far the least, and each of their 7 challenges, with one exception, were explicitly commented upon by at least one other group member.

6.(Impetus = C directed at Kathleen)

1 Kathleen ExCEPT, I'm NOT SAYing my life is ROUGH right now.  
I'm, I mean, I'm not complaining at ALL, about my  
life right now. I'm not.=

2 Virginia =Just like your mom. (1.5)

3 Kathleen NO, I, =

4 Several =(General gasps and laughs for 4.0 sec.)

5 Kathleen Okay, you all have a certain,=

6 Jessica =GOOD CALL, Virginia. (2.5)

7 Kathleen [Yeah, . I don't know,

8 Virginia [ Well, I've been [practicing, . last week.

9 Theodora Sounds like it (xxx) be so, is that what you're  
saying? .

Analysis: Impetus = C -> CC -> CCC -> CC and laughter -> CC

Appreciation -> CC and Appreciation Acknowledgement -> New C

Virginia was the newest member of the group, rarely spoke much at all, and uttered only this one challenge move in the data analyzed. It stopped the show. Four seconds of uninterrupted laughter, followed by an explicit positive commenting upon the challenge move was rare for this group of therapists used to challenging and being challenged. Virginia's status in the group, and her lack of practice at therapeutic challenges account for this unusual sequence, which leaves Kathleen unable to respond to a very strong CCC directed at her. The strength of this challenge comes from a narrative sequence a half hour earlier during which Kathleen told how her mother had been a long-suffering wife to an alcoholic and to several demanding children, without ever complaining. Note here the emphases in

Kathleen's CC, 6.1, accompanied by the self-editing marker I mean and the turn-initial except.

The actual distribution of challenges, when analyzed completely, will probably parallel quite closely the social network ties among group members, and the power hierarchy positions of each member within the group.

Two other challenge sequences from the data illustrate further how the combined use of structural feature and sequential analyses help to make sense of seeming anomalies in the discourse.

7.

- 1 Dana I think if someone talks to her, I think she needs to be aware that if she comes and does her class history, that she also will have to deal with our feelings that night. (1.0) I think it's fair to let her KNOW that. An if I were her I wouldn't come to that for nothin. [(1.0) I'm just letting you know
- 2 Chrissie [ Why?
- 3 Jessica [ (laugh)
- Dana that that gets pretty,=
- 4 Chrissie =Oh, you wouldn't?
- 5\*Dana I WOULDn't. Are you KIDDing? Gi, sharing a PAINFUL CLASS HISTORY, . and then, hearing everybody being PISSED OFF at [YOU] . You'd have to be a
- 6 Chrissie [ Oh.
- Dana MASOCHIST to want to do [that, in my book. (1.5)
- Chrissie [ Oh.
- Analysis: Pre-C = IC (to Kathleen) -> Question, Laugh, and Question -> \*CC -> Backchanneling Resp.

There is a sudden increase in the appearance of strong markers of disagreement and challenging in 7.5, which also does not appear to follow the sequencing rules of impetus, challenge, response, in that there is no prior challenge that would then account for this challenge formulation that is so strong it can only be interpreted as a CC or CCC. Note that it contains the only other example of a canonical challenge form in the entire data, Are you kidding?, along with a great deal of emphasis, a negative echo of the preceding question, the perjorative pissed off, the all-inclusive everybody, the strong label masochist, as well as several signals of self-editing, from false starts to hesitations. However, if we combine an analysis of the structural features of the turn with a sequential analysis, we see that Dana has most probably interpreted Chrissie's neutrally intoned question in 7.4 as a challenge response to Dana's IC in 7.1, and thus counter-challenges strongly in 7.5. Short of stopping the course of the interaction to assure Dana explicitly that she was not challenging in 7.4, Chrissie can do what she in fact does do in 7.6 to repair the tenor of the relationship

between them: she carefully attends to Dana and offers backchanneling signals of 'answer to question received'.

8.

- 1 Chrissie I JUST REALIZED ReGIna isn't here and, does Regina have Saturdays available?
- 2 Sarah She ALSO may want to STAY longer, wasn't it?
- 3 Dana We TRIED to get ahold of her and Vane, she left [the day before.
- 4 Vanessa [ And I called IOwa and talked to her MOM! (1.0) 'N she'd left left THAT MORNING. Dana, it was a good idea. I'm just sorry you didn't have it the day before.
- 5 Dana Yeah, me too.
- 6 Sarah Well we TALKed about it last WEEK. She'd left that last week? (1.5)
- 7 Dana We TALKed aBOUT, we didn't talk about CALLING her out THERE at her parents',=
- 8 Sarah =YEAH we DID, cuz we said HOW could you get in touch? 'member? and you guys were saying that CANDY would know, 'n .
- 9 Vanessa I didn't REALize we were gonna, no I, I didn't probl, I didn't, that didn't seem=
- 10Sarah =I THOUGHT that was the whole [POINT, was to call her ta,
- 11Vanessa [But we were, WELL, I ALready TOLD her!
- 12Sarah Yeah.

Analysis: Pre-C -> C -> Resp. and Resp. /Elaboration/Acknowledgement -> Acknowledgement Acceptance -> C -> Resp./CC -> CCC -> CC -> CCC -> CC -> Conceding Resp.

This example shows a complex exchange of Cs and CCCs from Sarah and defenses and CCs from Dana and Vanessa, who take turns defending themselves and each other, and a final backing down by Sarah. The frequency and strength of the challenge features increases noticeably from 8.2, with some emphasis, intensifier also, quantifier longer, and a tag question; through 8.6, the challenge renewal that uses turn-initial well, more emphasis, this time on the contested activity talk, past and past perfect tenses to buttress her time argument, and the use of a question requiring a response; to the strong CCC in 8.8, which includes a direct countering of Dana's CC in 8.7: we didn't with: YEAH we DID, even more emphasis, direct quoting of a previous question from the previous week, with emphasized question pronoun HOW, a question form requiring response: 'member?, and a further indirect quoting of the very speakers denying the conversation, with listing behavior, that threatens to go on with even further instantiations of the rightness of her position. Dana's CC in 8 begins as a response, echoing Sarah's challenging we talked about it, but breaks off in a self-editing move and turns into a counter-challenging we didn't talk about and goes on to

emphasize the activity of calling, which is at question. Dana's CC is latched onto by Sarah in her stongest 8.8 CCC move. Vanessa's response to this CCC is full of only false starts, self-edited into yet other attempts to counter Sarah, none of the 5 (!) of which are completed. This cannot be characterized as a conceding remark, however, because Vanessa includes some form of negation in each of these 5 false starts, indicating her adversarial stance to Sarah's position in 8.8. Sarah then latches onto Vanessa's string of stuttered partial CCs with a further CCC. This CCC is much weaker in tone, still using emphasis, but this time on I THOUGHT, which relativizes the argument by the double hedging of I think and past tense. Vanessa responds by interrupting Sarah right after this portion of 8.10 to continue a CC with but and move right on into a well, an intensifier already, an even further distant past perfect activity regarding Regina and telling, and all of this highly emphasized. At this point Sarah concedes with a simple Yeah; she has countered strongly, but once Vanessa counters in turn with a past tense verb and already there is nothing left for Sarah to argue.<sup>7</sup>

Challenges are a real entity in psychotherapeutic group interaction. They are a means of expressing both negative judgements and preferences for alternative behavior. Using structural feature and sequential analyses of their use, we can learn much about the functions they perform in a therapeutic context, as well as in ordinary conversation; and we can then extrapolate these methodologies and insights into differentiating other face-threatening, indirect speech acts.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Charles Ferguson, Robin Lakoff, Steve Levinson, Charlotte Linde, and John Rickford for their helpful comments and criticisms of this paper. All errors and oversights remain mine, of course.

<sup>2</sup> The felicity conditions are based on those devised by J.L. Austin and J. Searle, using Searle's formalizations.

<sup>3</sup> The examples have been edited because of space considerations, with extraneous material deleted. The transcription notation follows the conventions developed by Gail Jefferson and explicated in Atkinson and Heritage (84).

<sup>4</sup> In the question period Melinda Givens raised the question of how evaluative lexical items can be distinguished from factual descriptions, especially with regard to caught in people from 2.3, 2.5 and 2.6. There is a level of recognizing negative evaluation that is common to all native speakers and community members, then there is a level of recognition that is activity- or discipline-specific. In this case, to be caught in people is a characterization of a lack of what this group would describe as emotional sobriety; it reflects a therapeutic judgement. Interactionally, though, non-therapists would have been able to

pick out a negative judgement as well, because Dana, with her arm in a cast, had pounded with her cast arm on the floor, punctuating each of her KATHLEENS. A sequential analysis of this passage helps to alleviate any ambiguity, showing that something in the nature of 2.3 and 2.5 is leading Dana to response by hedging in 2.4 and 2.6, and finally to respond concessively in 2.8. The direct address name and pronoun, the use of what Labov (85:45) terms the intensifying no less than this usage of just, and the tag form huh? already signal challenging; the recognition of the negative value of being caught in people simply corroborates that. Givens' question points to the issue of the validity of using intuition in analyzing discourse. I believe that one cannot avoid it and refer the reader to Tannen (84:37-40) for a well-stated defense of the permissibility of intuition in interpretation.

<sup>5</sup> In the question period Charles Fillmore expressed concern that transcribing pauses as belonging to the prior utterance may be less helpful analytically than noting them at the beginning of the subsequent turn. Levinson (83:299) differentiates between gaps, lapses, and silences, and uses the term pause for all of these. Technically, only those pauses that follow a turn with clearly designated next speaker qualify as silences, and can validly be placed at the beginning of a next-speaker turn, if in fact the next speaker is the designated speaker. The (2.5) pause between 1.1 and 1.2 is an example of silence. In the group in question there were always eight to ten people participating, and often questions, opinions, and statements were directed more generally to the group at large. In such cases the lack of speech is either a gap or a lapse, not attributable to a designated next speaker. The (4.0), (2.0) and (4.0) pauses following 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 are such pauses. The data is also limited to audio recordings, thus eliminating visual clues for next-speaker designations. Fillmore's point is well-taken, with these further clarifications.

<sup>6</sup> The nature of courtroom challenges is very different from therapy challenges. The courtroom is a win-lose situation, and challenges there have the function of questioning the veracity or accuracy of witness's or defendant's statements to the court. Therapy, on the other hand, functions properly as a win-win situation, with challenges functioning as signalers of ambiguous, troubling or otherwise noteworthy features of personality or behavior.

<sup>7</sup> During the question period, Paul Kay expressed concern that my assignment of C, CC, CCC, or response may be arbitrary. I believe that this example 8 provides good evidence for the non-arbitrariness of these assignments of challenge move labels. There are many structural features in each move of example 8 that corroborate the sequential analysis.

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